

**Testimony of Marta Daniels in Support of HB-6355,
An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders (ERPO)**

March 4, 2021

To: Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

For the past thirty years I have been haunted by the tragic death of a good friend who, in the prime of life, was gunned down by a disgruntled, jealous and drunken neighbor one bright and beautiful day in May when he was out planting his garden. Had a law, such as CT's first ERPO bill of 1999 been in place, my friend would have had a chance to live a long and productive life. Had an HB-6355 bill been enacted back then, those of us who had tried repeatedly to alert legal authorities to the potential dangerousness of this killer would have resulted not only in an emergency protective order from a court to remove his firearms, *but keep them removed until the risk of danger from him could be proved.*

My friend's assassin met five of the six requirements needed for firearm removal under HB-6355:

1. He had made many threats towards my friend
2. He recklessly used, displayed and brandished a rifle
3. He had a history of using physical force against others
4. He had committed recent acts of cruelty and violence against animals (In one instance, my friend's pet dogs were found shot dead in the adjoining woods, but no one could prove who did it).
5. He had a long history of using and abusing alcohol.

The tragedy of this sad and unnecessary death 30 years ago is that law enforcement told us after each of our complaints and warnings that their hands were tied UNTIL a crime had been committed. They could do nothing to intervene. The first CT ERPO law in 1999 changed that, and this improved version (HB-6355) will strengthen it.

The ERPO law that exists on the books today temporarily removes firearms from individuals based on time, but it needs to be improved by including a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence *before the firearms are returned*. That is not the case now. In addition, it allows family members to petition the court directly, (as 12 other states do), and provides an alternative means of initiating the process for people reluctant to involve law enforcement at the outset, because they are concerned about stigmatizing the gun owner as a criminal.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works better to truly prevent firearm homicide (as well as suicides). Thank you for your consideration.

Marta Daniels

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